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Mr. *Wigglesworth's*
SERMON

At the Ordination of the Reverend

Mr. *Josiah Dennis.*



THE REV. JOHN W. B. ...

... of the ...

SERMON

... of the Reverend ...

... of the ...

... of the ...

*The Excellency of the Gospel-Message; with
the Duty and Dignity of the Messengers of
Christ.*

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SERMON

Preached at the

East Precinct in Yarmouth,

June 22. 1727.

At the ORDINATION of the Reverend

JOSIAH DENNIS, M.A.

By SAMUEL WIGGLESWORTH, M. A.
Pastor of a Church in Ipswich.

Psal. 118. 26 *Blessed be he that cometh in the name
of the LORD; we have blessed you out of the house
of the LORD.*

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The Excellency of the Gospel-Message, &c.

Rom. 10. 15.

*How beautiful are the feet of them that preach
the Gospel of Peace, that bring glad tidings
of good things !*

THE ancient Prophecy referr'd to by the Apostle in these Words, is, without doubt that *Isa. 52. 7. How beautiful upon the Mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good Tidings, that publisheth Peace, that bringeth good tidings of Good, that publisheth Salvation, that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth !* Which Words are capable of a double Interpretation, viz. *Literal and Mystical*. The *literal* sense of the Prophecy is, that they who should bring Tidings to the Jews of the Dissolution of the *Babylonish Captivity*, and the Redemption of their Brethren from that Bondage, should come on a most grateful Errand, and be received with Joy.

That the Words *nextly* meant thus, is evident from several concurring Passages, in the Chapter wherein they are found.

But then this Evangelical Prophet had an Eye to remoter and greater Events, even to the Kingdom of the Messiah, and the spiritual Redemption of his People. He describes the desireableness of their Message, who should be employed in future Time, to publish the most joyful Advent of the great Saviour of the World, who was to lead Captivity Captive, to deliver Mankind from the power of Darkness, the bondage of Satan, into the Glorious liberty of the Sons of God: The justness of which Mystical Sense is sufficiently warranted by the Apostle Paul's use of the Words in our Text. For he manifestly improves them, to set forth the Beauty and Desireableness of the Ministers of Christ, on account of the Message which they bring to Mankind.

— *How beautiful are the feet of them that Preach the Gospel of Peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!* Some small alterations are here made by the Apostle in reciting the Prophet's Words; but the Substance is the same; and the alterations seem intended to exclude the Literal sense, which respected things long before finish'd and out of date.

Let us now consider the Apostle's Words.

How beautiful, comely, or sightly! or, as others would have the Word rendered, *desireable*. That which is really *beautiful*, is very often *desireable* also; Witness the Fruit of the forbidden Tree, Gen. 3. 6. and perhaps 'tis a Metaphorical beauty,

ty, i. e. desireableness that is here chiefly intended: Not so much a beauty striking the Eye, as inkindling desire in the Soul.

Are the Feet. i. e. as some think the Persons of the Messengers, by a *Synecdoche* of the *Part*. But others suppose that by the *Feet* is rather signified the *Coming* of these desirable Messengers: A *Metonymy* of the *Cause*; the Feet being the instruments of motion. But then doubtless here is a Trope within a Trope; for the Advent of the Ministers of Christ signifies their Message, and the Contents or Matter of it. For the Apostle presently shews wherein the chief desireableness of these Messengers consists, viz. in the *Gospel of peace*, and the *glad Tidings of good things*, which they are employed to bring to their Brethren.

In the Words, Note,

1. The Subjects spoken of: viz. the Ministers of the Gospel.
2. That which is Prædicated of Ministers, that their Office or Message is beautiful in a very high degree.
3. How beautiful are the Feet ———

This beauty or desireableness of the Gospel-Ministry is Illustrated from the Contents or Matter of their Message, viz. *Peace and Good things*. ——— *That preach the Gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things.*

These Words are spoken not meerly in way of Description of the Subject, but partly in way of Demonstration of the truth here asserted.

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What I purpose to speak upon this Subject, shall be under the two following Doctrines, *viz.*

- I. That the Ministers of Christ, and their Message to Mankind, are highly beautiful and desirable.
- II. That their chief beauty or desireableness, consists in the Matter or Contents of their Message, *viz. peace and good things.*

Doct. I. That the Ministers of Christ, and their Message to Mankind are highly beautiful and desirable. I shall not need to insist much on this First Doctrine; nor indeed can I do it without interfering with the Second, whose business it will be to unfold the principal Beauty of the Gospel Ministry. Nevertheless, keeping clear of what must then be spoken, there are other Adornings of that Office, well deserving to be here considered.

Thus the Ministers of the Gospel are beautified with a Divine Commission. They are Persons invested with a public Character; Ambassadors of the *blest and only Potentate; the Messengers of the Lord of Hosts*: They are to be looked upon as in God's stead; the business they are employed about is their Master's business; and the Words they speak to be considered as the Words of God, and not of Man. Job. 33. 6. Jer. 1. 7. Ezek. 33. 7. And as Ministers are Christ's Officers and Representatives: so they do not take this honour to themselves, but wait until they be called of God, and solemnly authorized to act in his name.

Nor

The Gospel-Message.

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Nor is it a light thing that Ministers are in some sort Labourers together with God ; their Master admits them to be Fellow Workmen with himself, 1. Cor. 3. 9. They are Successors unto Christ, that great Prophet that was sent from God ; they carry on the same Work that he began on Earth ; they preach the same Life and Immortality, which he brought to light by the Gospel.

I add, Ministers are, or ought to be, Persons of an elevated Education and Accomplishments. They are usually Men of knowledge; otherwise the blind would be set to lead the blind : *The preacher is wise that can truly teach the People, and turn many unto Righteousness.* Now where these distinguishing Endowments are found, they are ever accounted Ornamental, and serve to beget Veneration to their Persons and Function.

Lastly, 'Tis not in common but holy Things that they minister ; viz. in Things pertaining to God and the Souls of Men : They pursue no lesser ends than the Glory of God and the Salvation of Men, in their Ministry. Their Employment is not to advise Men about their worldly Substance, or bodily Health ; not to prescribe or execute Laws for the maintaining of civil Peace and Order ; nor yet to instil humane Knowledge and Prudence into the Minds of their People, (tho' these also are necessary Employments) but to serve their People's best Interests, viz. to promote their Duty to their Maker, and their own everlasting Welfare ; to turn Men from Darkness to Light, and from the power of Satan to God, from the brutish, deformed, and destructive Works of
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Darkness, to the beautiful and pleasant paths of Wisdom; to perswade them to embrace that Christ who is altogether lovely in Himself, and whose Yoke is easy and Burden light, that so they may at last inherit Glory, Honour and Peace, and shine as the Stars for ever and ever.

I waive any Application of this first Doctrine at present; intending to improve both the Doctrines conjunctly.

Doct. II. That the chief Beauty and Desirableness of Ministers and their Message consists in the Matter, or Contents of their Message; viz. *peace and good things.*

How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the Gospel of peace, and bring glad Tidings of good things!

The Word is but one in the Original, which our Translation renders diversely. *To preach the Gospel, and to bring glad Tidings*, tho' differing Terms, must be here understood as expressing the same Office. There may be other glad Tidings indeed, besides those which the Gospel contains: but they are not worthy to be compared with them; and therefore let the Gospel Message alone be called by that Name, and its Ministers the Messengers of glad Tidings.

For the Illustration of this Doctrine,
 I. We will premise, that the Ministers of Christ are *Messengers*. They are in the Text spoken of under the Notion of Messengers, and their Ministration of the delivering a Message. They are

are sent from God, as in the Context; *How shall they preach except they be sent?* They are sent unto Mankind, *Acts 26. 17.* They are sometimes called *Angels*, i. e. *Messengers*; and they bring a Message unto Mankind, the Contents whereof we read in our Text.

2. According to our Text and Doctrine, the Ministers of Christ are Messengers of Good. They are **EVANGELISTS**: For that is the Word used in the Text to express their Function; The Notation whereof shews that they are Messengers of Good, and bring happy News to Mankind. *They preach the Gospel of Peace, and bring glad Tidings of Good things.* Peace and Good Things are the Contents of their Message.

But are these happy Contents one or several? May we suppose *PEACE* to be one of the *Good Things*? Or will it not be more proper to consider these two Contents of the Evangelick Message, as bearing the relation of *Cause* and *Effect*? Doubtless, that Peace which we preach to our Hearers, is the cause of all the other Good Things we assure them of, and recommend to their Pursuit.

If it be enquired, What is the Peace which the Gospel Messengers bring? I Answer, Peace with God thro' Jesus Christ; who hath satisfied Divine Justice, and made room for the pardoning of Sinners, and receiving them again into the Favour of their offended Maker. This is the great Subject to be insisted on by Ministers. They must inform and frequently remind Men, that God who is a consuming Fire, is angry with the wicked every day, and will by no means clear

the guilty, is appeased thro' the Blood of his Son; and exhort them by Faith in the Mediator, together with unfeigned Repentance, to escape his Wrath due to them for Sin. The Tenour of the Gospel is, *Repent and be converted, that your Sins may be blotted out; Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and no Condemnation shall belong to you.* That this is the first and principal Point of our Errand to Mankind, is evident from several Texts of Scripture, *Ezek. 33. 8. Acts 26. 18.* But from none more plainly than from those words of the Apostle Paul, *2. Cor. 5. 18, 19, 20. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the Ministry of Reconciliation. To wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the World to himself, not imputing their Trespases unto them, and hath committed to us the word of Reconciliation. Now then we are Ambassadors for Christ, as tho' God did beseech you by us; we pray you be reconciled unto God.*

But then, **PEACE** with God is not the only Good Thing which the Ministers of Christ bring the News of; This is a Good that never comes alone, but is the fruitful Parent of many more: Christ's Ambassadors are to Exhort as Eliphaz did, *Job. 22. 21. Acquaint now thy self with him, and be at PEACE, thereby GOOD shall come unto thee.*

Peace with God is not meerly Negative; it supposes not only a Freedom from his Wrath, but an Interest in his Favour, and a Title to his Benefits. There is a League, a Covenant between God and the Soul that is at Peace with him. It is an Evangelical Prophet that brings those glad Tidings ~~unto~~ *Incline your Ear, and come unto me; hear*

hear and your Soul shall live: and I will make an everlasting Covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. Even Temporal Mercies, as far as they serve to God's Glory and the Enjoyer's Good, are the matter of Gospel Promises; and we are to tell Men in Christ's Name, that *Godliness bath the promise of the life that now is.* 1. Tim. 4. 8.

But the Good Things that are not seen and are eternal, are they which our Lord would have his Ministers principally set before their Hearers. Immortal Glory and Honour, as well as Peace, are Christ's promised Rewards to the obedient. Crowns of Righteousness and Glory, Mansions of Bliss, the beatifick Vision of God, the Fulness of Joy, and Rivers of sublime Pleasures; These are substantial, satisfying & eternal Good Things, contained in the Glad Tidings brought by the Evangelick Ministry. And surely therefore,

3. The Ministers of Christ and their Message must needs be very beautiful and desireable, upon account of these happy Contents. To be a Messenger of good News, is an Office usually much coveted, and even envied: How common a thing is it, for Princes to give ample Rewards to such as bring them News of Victories won, or Cities taken by their Arms, or of the Ratification of an honourable and advantageous Peace to their Subjects! How highly is the Traveller caressed that informs us of the Welfare of our dear absent Relatives, or of any prosperous Circumstance attending our outward Estate! And are there any Tidings worthy to be compared with the Evangelick Tidings? Can any News be brought us equally agreeable with the News that is published
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from the Pulpit? Mark what the Angel said to the Shepherds, when he brought them Tidings of Christ's Nativity. *Luke 2. 10, 11. I bring you Tidings, of great Joy, which shall be to all People. For unto you is born this day, in the City of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.* Thus we perceive the Angels of Heaven esteem the Gospel Tidings most desirable Tidings: And shall not Men on Earth also from a sense thereof say, *Glory be to God in the highest, for this News of Peace and good Will to themselves.* — *Blessed are the People that know the Joyful Sound.*

If it be a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God; if to dwell with devouring Fire and everlasting Burning, be a misery, the thoughts whereof create an inexpressible Horror in our Minds; Then surely to be informed of a way whereby we may agree with this Adversary, appease his destructive Wrath, & obtain his present Love, and future Rewards; whereby our Execution shall be countermanded, and our Condemnation reversed; whereby of Prisoners of Justice we shall become Prisoners of Hope, and of Sons of Perdition made the Sons and Daughters of the Lord Almighty; be ransomed from the bottomless Pit, admitted into the heavenly Paradise, crown'd with Glory, and obtain Joy and Gladness: To be informed, I say, of a sure method of bringing these blessed Changes to pass, what ineffable transports will it create in our Breasts! If a marvellous Stupefaction hath not possessed us, such News will put Gladness in our Hearts, more than in the time that our Corn and Wine are increased; In-
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conceiveably more than the Tidings of any prosperous Event relating to our Temporal Affairs.

Having thus spoken to the Doctrines, I pass on to the Improvement.

And here,

1. This Discourse may be applied to all such whom God is pleased to employ, as his Messengers, in bringing the *Glad Tidings of Peace and Good Things.*
2. It may be applied to their Hearers.

1. What has been spoken is applicable to all such whom God is pleased to employ as his Messengers in bringing the *Glad Tidings of Peace and Good Things.* And

1. If Ministers are God's Messengers (as we have heard) then let them wait for those Divine Orders that make them so. It becomes them not presumptuously to invade the sacred Office, and run before the Lord sends them. They must obey the Call of Providence, and stay until they be duly qualified, and regularly inducted and authorized. *Heb. 5. 4.*

2. It is required moreover of Messengers, as well as of Stewards, that a Man be found faithful. If Ministers are God's Messengers to Mankind, then they are greatly entrusted by him; and must be accountable to him, respecting the execution of their Office. It highly concerns them therefore faithfully to deliver the Message of God to their People. *Whatsoever I command thee*
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thou shalt speak, says God to *Jeremiah*, i. 7. And therefore, as on the one hand they must not fill their Sermons with Rhetorick, Philosophy, History, Politicks, Flattery, Railing and Sedition, which are things foreign to the Evangelick Message: So on the other hand, they must fully deliver the Message of Peace. It is a faithful saying, and what God willeth that his Ministers affirm constantly, *viz.* That Jesus Christ came into the World to save Sinners; that he died to purchase, and hath ascended on high to prepare, a Place of infinite Happiness and transcendent Glory, for all that will comply with his Terms, and stands ready by his Word and Spirit, to enlighten, sanctify, and guide us in the way everlasting.

Moreover, Ministers cannot acquit themselves faithful Messengers from God to Mankind, unless they do sincerely and indefatigably set themselves to promote the End of their Mission, *viz.* to bring Men to the Possession of the *Peace and Good Things* they proclaim, and to make them embrace them in their Causes. It is incumbent on them, to labour earnestly in the great Work of bringing Sinners into terms of Peace with God. It is not enough for them to inform their Hearers, that God is in Christ reconciling the World to himself; and that he hath no pleasure in the Death of Sinners, but would rather they should turn and live: But they must urge them also, *Turn ye, Turn ye, why will ye die?* They must cry aloud and spare not, lifting up their Voice like a Trumpet, frequently and earnestly calling upon Sinners, — *We pray you be reconciled unto God: Repent and be converted; Cease to do evil, learn to do well,*

well. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. They must leave no Means unessayed, setting the infinite Mercy of GOD, and the boundless Merits of Christ's Passion before the sinking despairing Soul for Encouragement; and bringing the Torrours of the Lord in view of the secure and obstinate Transgressour: to the end that both may be made to seek Peace with GOD, and work out their own Salvation.

3. Another thing which Ministers may strongly be exhorted to from the Text and Discourse upon it is, That they do their utmost to render their Ministry *Beautiful* and *Desirable* to Mankind. The best and most honourable Office may be marr'd by the Misbehaviour of such as sustain it. Let the Ministers of Christ therefore keep up the Dignity and Beauty of their Office. How shall Men be won by a Ministry, in which they can see no Beauty nor Comeliness? Our Embassy will be frustrate, as to the Glory of GOD and Man's Salvation, unless we be careful to put on the Ornaments that justly belong to it. It may not be improper to hint at a few things for our direction. And here,

1. That Minister who is destitute of any necessary Qualification for his ministerial Office, will never appear Beautiful in it, unless to incompetent Judges. Natural Abilities are not a sufficient Furniture of the Mind for that Service. And tho' in the beginning of Gospel-Days, when the Novelty of the Christian Religion needed Miracles to support its Truth, our Lord saw cause by immediate Inspiration to confer ministerial Gifts on Persons wholly illiterate; yet none may now
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reasonably expect, that unsought Accomplishments will be infused into him. Education, Study and Prayer are now the Method, whereby the Candidates of the Evangelical Ministry must be fitted for their Charge. *They must incline their Ear unto Wisdom, and apply their Heart to Understanding. They must cry after Knowledge, and lift up their Voice for Understanding. They must seek for her as for Silver, and search for her as for hid Treasures.*

How shall a Minister be able to interpret the sacred Scriptures, and resolve their knotty difficult Texts? How shall he know the Truth, or vindicate it from its opposers? How shall he inform his Hearers Judgments, or warm their Affections; satisfy their doubting Consciences, and do many other Parts of his Ministry, unless his Mind be raised up above the common Level of Mankind? And how contemptible a thing is an ignorant Ministry!

But is Knowledge the only requisite Qualification? No surely; Ministers had need be firmly perswaded of the Verity of those Divine Truths which they preach, else with what face can they offer them to their Hearers Faith? The Fear of GOD must have a powerful Operation within them: *Knowing the Terrour of the Lord*, they will with a becoming Zeal, Authority and Impartiality reprove, rebuke and exhort Men. Moreover, if they have not the Love of Christ to constrain them, it will soon appear, that they live to themselves only, and not to GOD and the Souls of Men. *Simon Son of Jonas, lovest thou me?—feed my Sheep; saith our Lord. John 21. 16, 17.* Nor is it less necessary, that Ministers love their Flocks,

Flocks, and have a Sense of the Value of immortal Souls: How negligently else will they watch over them! How absurdly would our Pastoral Addresses appear! And how coldly would they be received by our People; unless Love were supposed to be the Motive! But if our Love exist only in Diffimulation, how apt shall we be to be discovered! And how odious will the Hypocrisy appear!

Lastly; No Man is, in any good measure qualified for the Work of the Ministry, who is not sensible of the great Weight and Difficulty of this Work, and the Inequality of his Ability thereto. A Minister, be he ever so learned wise and pious, must say with the Apostle Paul, 2 Cor. 3. 5. *Not that we are sufficient of our selves to think any thing as of our selves; but our Sufficiency is of GOD.* Pride, Vain-confidence, and Self-sufficiency are very uncomly Vices; and Humility, Carefulness, Faith and Prayer, are very Ornamental; especially in a Minister. And moreover, whilst he endeavours to work out his own and his Hearers Salvation with Fear and Trembling, he will be less likely to run in vain, and miss the Honour of turning many unto Righteousness.

2. Since (as we have heard already) a principal Part of the beauty of our Message to Mankind, consists in the Matter or Contents of it; it follows, that we cannot be too curious about the Things which we deliver to our Auditors.

We must be sure so far to take heed to our selves and Doctrine, as to preach the Truth, and that only. In our Doctrine we must shew *Uncorruptness*——— *sound Speech that cannot be condemn-*

ned; Titus 2. 1, 7, 8. *To the Law and to the Testimony*; if Ministers speak not according to this, there will be no Light nor Beauty in their Sermons. How many deformed Monsters, I mean foul Errours, have been propagated from the Pulpit, whilst Preachers, forsaking the written Word, and what may be rationally inferred from it, have presumed to vent their own wild undigested Notions for *Doctrine*; and to build Wood Hay and Stubble upon Christ's golden Foundation?

And as Ministers may not mix their own Fancies with Divine Truths; so neither may they shun to declare to their Hearers the whole Truth, the whole Counsel of GOD. Yea, tho' his Commandments should be grievous to some of their Hearers, and they should say concerning them, *These are hard sayings*; yet they must be faithfully informed, and pressed to compliance.

And tho' it be true, that no part of GOD's Will is to be kept back from our People; yet doubtless there are the greater and weightier Matters of the Law: and these claim our first, most frequent and passionate Recommendation. If we should fill our Pulpit Discourses with things whose weight is small, or whose Morality may be called in question; we should soon bring those Discourses into Contempt.

To proceed; How beautiful are the Priest's Lips, when they keep Knowledge, and when they teach the good Knowledge of the Lord to their People. *Mal. 2. 7. 2 Chron. 30. 22.* Tho' some injudicious Auditors may cry up a Preacher for the Warmth that accompanies his Delivery, and the Motion they find communicated to their
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own Passions therefrom; yet doubtless a more principal Beauty of our Ministry is, that it be Instructive, and tend to enrich our Hearers Understandings and Judgments, with that Light which is likely to give the most lasting Bias to their Wills and Affections. Heat without Reason will make but little Impression on a rational Mind; and its Impression on any Mind will be but as the Morning Cloud.

In a Word, Inasmuch as every thing is beautiful in its Time and Place, therefore our dispensed Truths must pay a deference hereto. There is a Time to reprove, rebuke and exhort; and there is also a Time to refrain. Some Persons also are to be instructed, others reprov'd; some are to be awakened, others comforted; some to be exhorted, others cautioned: And blessed is that Servant, to whom his Lord shall give the Wisdom of dispensing to every one his Portion in due Season. Verily, a Word thus fitly spoken, will appear like Apples of Gold in Pictures of Silver. It will be pleasing and successful.

3. The Gospel-Message may receive some addition of Beauty, from the Manner in which it is delivered. Ministers stand in GOD's stead; and it is no less a thing than Man's Eternal Happiness that is carrying on; and therefore it seems requisite, that in their Doctrine they should shew not only Uncorruptness, but Gravity in Word and Behaviour: Avoiding all ludicrous Phrases, obscene Allusions, and antick Gestures.

Nor ought our Style (tho' far from being a principal thing) to be altogether neglected. If
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we express our selves barbarously, unconnectedly and immethodically; if we debase our Divine Truths to coarse and homespun Metaphors, we shall give Disgust to polite Minds. Not but that Religion has numerous native Charms, and needs no foreign Recommendations. Nevertheless, the wisest of mere humane Preachers esteemed it no useless thing, to *seek out acceptable Words*, and cloath his wise Doctrine with well chosen Expressions. *Eccles. 12. 10.*

But if our Style be correct, yet it must be very plain and intelligible. Sublime Truths may be couch'd in an humble Style; and in so doing, we our selves shall shew more Learning and Skill, and our Auditors be more advanced in Knowledge.

I add, that it is proper and necessary for Ministers to apply themselves to their Auditories with so much Warmth, as is sufficient to convince them that they are in earnest, and would be glad to serve their spiritual Interests: This will do not a little towards making the Weapons of their Warfare powerful. Yet withal, Ministers must be mild, gentle and patient, beseeching Men to be reconciled unto GOD; reproving and exhorting with all Long-suffering and Doctrine. A moderate Shower sinks into the Earth, softens and makes it fruitful, whilst a fierce Rain runs off into Puddles and Rivulets, and so becomes in a manner unserviceable. Thus it is in our Pastoral Addresses; an indiscreet Roughness provokes Men's Passions, while a gentle Reproof is an ex-cement Oyl, that will not break their heads.

4. It will be a further Beauty to our Ministry, if we endeavour that all our other Actions may concur and co-operate with our publick Ministration of the Word. They are greatly mistaken, who think there is no preaching out of the Pulpit: There are more private Methods of delivering the Gospel of Peace and Good Things. The Masters of Christian Assemblies, may, in their Pastoral Visits, clinch the Nails which they have more publickly fastned. In their common Conversation, Ministers may speak many things that are good to the use of edifying, without incurring the Charge of Impertinency. How beautiful and harmonious doth it look, for one who labours in the Word and Doctrine, to strive and wrestle at the same time in his Prayers, for a Blessing on his Labours. Lastly; It will be an inexpressible Beauty to our Ministry, if we will adorn the Doctrines which we preach, by a conformable Life; a Life remote from those Vices and Vanities we warn others against, and in close application to those Duties we recommend to others; if we will set our selves as an Example of the Believer, not only in Word but Conversation.

Hereby we shall set before our Hearers a constant Instructor, and a living Pattern; and shall be speaking to them with the greatest Eloquence, even when our Tongues are silent. Yea, even Death it self shall not be able to silence us: Our Flocks will, after our decease, have our Behaviour still in remembrance; tho' the airy Sound be vanished. Hereby we shall convince Men of
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the Reality of Divine Truths; at least that we our selves believe the Reality of them: which will not a little conduce to make others *believe our Report*, and entertain our Message. In a Word, if we do indeed make our Light shine before Men, we have ground to hope, that many seeing our good Works, will glorify that heavenly Father who hath sent us.

2. I proceed to improve what has been spoken under this Text, to the Use of those that sit under the Evangelical Ministry, and frequently hear the Glad Tidings. And,

1. Are your Ministers GOD's Messengers? Take care then how you treat them. An earthly Prince accounts his own Honour very much concerned in the Entertainment that is given to his Ambassador; and the King of Heaven also will highly resent it, if you offer any Indignity to the Persons of your Ministers, or treat their Administrations with Dishonour. Remember the Fire that came down upon the two presumptuous Captains and their Fifties, from that GOD who hath said, *Do my Prophets no harm.* 1 Chron. 16. 22. See our Saviour's Words, *Luke 10. 16.—And he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me.*

2. Are your Ministers GOD's Messengers? how absurd will it be for you to be offended at their Doctrine; so long as they deliver the Truth only, and keep within the compass of the Message they are charged with? Will you be offended at a Message from GOD? or will you blame the Messenger for discharging his Duty, and delivering his own Soul?

3. Is there such a Beauty or Desireableness accompanying the Evangelical Ministry? Be persuaded then, to labour after a sense of this Beauty; and also suitably to acknowledge and express it. Suppress all mean and contemptible thoughts of it. Say not, What necessity is there of Preachers? and, Where is the advantage of hearing them? Remember that where Vision faileth the People perish. Account not the Charge as burdensome, which the Ministry brings along with it: but rather think it your most gainful Exchange, to impart of your carnal Things to them that communicate of their spiritual Things to you. *1 Cor. 9. 11.* Account it a distinguishing Glory and Happiness of our Land, that she hath of her own Sons to take her by the Hand. Let your sense of the Beauty of the Gospel-Ministry discover it self in a suitable respect to the Persons of your Ministers; esteeming them very highly in love for their Work's sake. *1 Thess. 5. 13.* Your Regard to your Ministers Persons will conduce to open a Passage for their Doctrine to your Hearts, and render it effectual. But if GOD's Providence should so order it, that any of you should live under the Ministry of one whose personal Character and Qualities you cannot esteem; yet let not that prejudice you against his good Doctrine, and beautiful Message. Embrace the Glad Tidings which he brings, notwithstanding his personal Unworthiness. The Scribes and Pharisees were to be obeyed in their good Doctrine, tho' their Hypocrisy was to be detested.

And this brings me to say, Acknowledge the
D. Beauty

Beauty of the Gospel-Ministry, by your obeying it, and by embracing that Christ who is therein offered to you. Let the Sabbath be your delight: Let GOD's Tabernacle be amiable to you: Harken to the Voice of the Charmer: Open the everlasting Doors that the King of Glory may come into your Souls: Let none of his Commandments be grievous to you; but always say concerning them, that they are more to be desired than Gold, sweeter than Honey and the Honey-comb.

4. Is the Evangelical Ministry thus beautiful? Take heed then, that you do nothing to sully or deface its Beauty; but do all you can to increase it. You will abhor doing any thing willingly, that may disparage the sacred Character; and bring the most honourable Work into contempt. You will be so far from raising any slanderous Report of your Ministers, as even not to hear an Accusation against them, without the greatest Caution: *1 Tim. 5. 19. Against an Elder receive not an Accusation, but before two or three Witnesses.* Nay, you will rather wipe off their unjust Reproaches, and vindicate their good Name, when you hear it calumniated. Remember that our Lord holdeth these Stars in his right Hand. He is very tender of them; and if any evil minded Persons should raise Clouds to darken their Brightness, they must expect (without Repentance) to inherit Blackness of Darkness: They themselves shall rise unto Shame, and everlasting Contempt. Nevertheless, your tenderness for the ministerial Character must not make you neglect to reprove and exhort them, if occasion be. *Col. 4. 17. And say to Archippus, take heed to the Ministry which thou*

thou hast received in the Lord that thou fulfil it. Only remember, that your plainness should be accompanied with a Decorum: Intreat him as a Father.

1. Tim. 5. 1.

Moreover, how good and how pleasant it is for Ministers and their People to dwell together in Unity! Surely there will the Lord command the Blessing on the Ministerial Labours. You will treat the Ministers of Peace very unbecomingly, if you oppose, resist, and form Parties against them; to enervate their Discipline, and destroy that Authority which Christ hath put into their hands. You will rather *Obeys them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves.* *Heb. 13. 17.*

I may not omit saying, that you will greatly debase the Dignity, and deface the Beauty of the sacred Function, if you do not afford your Ministers a liberal Maintenance. If it were a Debasement of the Office for *Feroboam* to make Priests of the lowest of the People; it will be no less vile and dishonourable, for Christian Congregations to reduce their Ministers to such a low inferior Estate, by their parsimonious Allowances. This will cause both their Libraries and their Heads to be but meanly furnished; their Discourses will grow lean; their Lamps will burn dim for lack of Oyl; they will not be able to give themselves to their Work, nor to be *given to Hospitality.*

Lastly, What a Beauty doth Success add to the Gospel-Ministry! You cannot adorn it by any means so much as by embracing it. O how Amiable! to see Men fleeing to Christ as a Cloud, and as Doves to their Windows; flocking to acknowledge Christ, and celebrate his Name, in and

by Gospel-Ordinances? If our Hearers would do thus, it would make our Ministry shine as the brightness of the Firmament; and our heavenly Father should be glorified by the much Fruit that would be brought forth.

5. Doth the principal Beauty and Desireableness of the Gospel-Messengers consist in the Contents of their Message? Let this then be the Rule for Hearers to judge the Performances of their Preachers by. The Hearers of the Word are too often so carnal as to say, I am of *Paul*, I of *Apollos*; Nay, and very often they are so weak as to prefer one Preacher to another for the sake of inconsiderable, yea, it may be only imaginary Advantages. Whereas the Ministers of the Gospel are all one Lord's Servants, all equally Messengers of the Lord of Hosts, sent on the same Errand, proclaiming the same Glad Tidings, and proposing the same End: So that it should seem most proper to respect and treat them all alike. Or, if they must have different Degrees of Regard paid them; surely their more or less Fidelity in delivering their Message, is a better Rule for that Estimation, than those fancied Gifts and Parts aforementioned. Let that Minister be most revered and honoured, that preaches Christ most, and whose Sermons do dwell most upon the important Subject of the Reconciliation of Sinners to GOD by Faith and Repentance.

Hitherto my *Improvement* has been general; it will be expected, that before I conclude, I should address my self more particularly to those that are concerned in this Days Solemnity. And therefore I will now

I. Offer

I. Offer something to You, reverend and dear Sir, who are about to be invested with Pastoral Authority, and made a Messenger of the Gospel-Tidings to this People. I have no design to repeat the Things that have already been spoken to such of us as sustain the Evangelical Office: I doubt not but you will consider and practice them. Your extraordinary Desire, even from your tender Years, to be qualified for the Work of the Ministry, and the peculiar Steps whereby Providence has at length effected this your Desire, give no small Ground to hope, that the same Providence intends you for an Instrument of Service in your Day.

And I make no question but that, amongst many other powerful Motives to your faithful discharge of your Ministry, you will consider that the Eyes of many will be upon you, and much expected from you.

I know that you are not unacquainted with the Scriptures, and that you are no small lover of Books: and this makes me have the greater confidence for you, that you will still give your self to Reading and Studying, in order to your increasing in ministerial Accomplishments, and becoming a Scribe instructed to the Kingdom of Heaven, and a Workman that needeth not to be ashamed; and also that you will be evermore improving your Acquisitions to the Profit of your Hearers, striving to make all of them wise unto Salvation.

I hope you will remember that you are GOD's Messenger to your People; and that you will make it your Business in your Ministry, to preach
Peace

Peace with GOD thro' Jesus Christ, and the eternal Good that is consequent upon this Peace, and to do your utmost to bring many of them to embrace these glorious Tidings; and that, considering the Honour of GOD and the Success of your Ministry depends on your well acquitting your self in your Trust, you will endeavour both in Doctrine and Example to magnify and beautify your Office. I only add, *Take heed to thy self and to thy Doctrine,*—— *for in doing this thou shalt both save thy self and them that hear thee.* 1 Tim. 4. 16. Feed the Flock of GOD which thou art going to take the oversight of; and when the chief Shepherd shall appear, thou shalt receive a Crown of Glory that fadeth not away. 1 Pet. 5. 2, 4.

2. I shall conclude my Discourse, with a few Words to those Professors of Christ's Name who are now about to be formed into a particular Church, and to the Christian Assembly usually convening in this place.

Highly beloved;

We congratulate the Honour and Happiness GOD has conferr'd upon you, in setting up his amiable Tabernacle among you; The Beauty of the Lord your GOD is upon you; Salvation is (now) come to your Houses. Blessed is the Man whom GOD chooseth, and causeth to approach unto Him and dwell in His Courts! May GOD evermore make you joyful in this House of Prayer: May your Burnt-offerings and Sacrifices be accepted on his Altar: May you from time to time see much of the Beauty of the Lord in his Temple: May you be so planted in the House of the Lord, as to flourish in the Courts of our GOD:

And

And may you still bring forth Fruit in old Age, and be fat and flourishing.

You are about to be formed into a particular Church of Christ, and to come under the most solemn Engagements for your Redeemer's Service: May you indeed become a chosen Generation, a royal Priesthood, an holy Nation, and a peculiar People; shewing forth the Praises of that Saviour who gave himself to redeem you from all Iniquity: And may GOD make an everlasting Covenant with you, even the sure Mercies of *David*.

Thro' the tender Mercy of GOD, you have not sat in Darkness, nor in the shadow of Death. A Teacher hath been sent to you, to guide your Feet in the way of Peace: And now the time is come, in which your Pastor Elect is to be *endued with Power from on high*; and to be made your Overseer by the Holy Ghost; but instrumentally by the laying on of the Hands of the Presbytery. Will you not out of the abundance of a grateful Heart say, *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is now blessing us with so great a spiritual Blessing?* Will ye not welcome this Embassador from the King of Glory? saying with Heart and Mouth, *Blessed is he that cometh in the Name of the Lord*. See to it, that ye attend upon his Ministry; that ye yield Obedience to his wholesome Discipline; that ye value his Judgment, seeking the Law at his Mouth; that ye open your Souls to him, and apply to him in all Cases, as one that is (under Christ) your spiritual Physician.

Let his good Name be so precious with you,

as to make you cover all his Infirmities: Be evermore ready with your wise Counsel, your Courage and Interest, to extricate him from all his Difficulties: And be exhorted to think it your Duty and Interest, to open your Hands wide for the preventing his outward Wants.

Finally; Beloved, your frequent and fervent Prayers, are what your Pastor will have an unquestionable Right to, as well as Occasion for. And how beautiful will it be, if whilst your Minister is studying, preaching and praying for your spiritual Welfare, you do also join your Prayers to his for Assistance and Success?

By your Prayers you may prevail with GOD for the prolonging your Minister's Life: In doing of which he will indeed pour his Blessing upon your Offspring, and speak well of your Houses for a great while to come. By the same Means you may obtain an increase of Ministerial Gifts and Graces to your Minister: And lastly, This will be the way to have a plenteous Harvest of Souls attending on his Ministry. Then shall he teach Transgressours GOD's Ways, and Sinners shall be converted unto Him: And to his Comfort your Pastor shall perceive, that his Labour is not in vain in the Lord. Let me conclude with the Words of David, Psalm 132. 9. *Let thy Priests be clothed with Righteousness, and let thy Saints shout for Joy; And the Prayer of the Church, Cant. 4. 16. Awake O North Wind, and come thou South, blow upon my Garden, that the Spices thereof may flow out: Let my beloved come into his Garden, and eat his pleasant Fruits.*

